

Statement from Congresswoman Shelley Berkley  
Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support  
Hearing on Modernizing Unemployment Benefits  
September 19, 2007

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. The Unemployment Insurance system, when it was created more than 70 years ago, was an important step to ensure the well being of American workers and the health of the U.S. economy. By helping to provide for subsistence in times of economic downturn and mass lay-offs, this federal-state partnership has helped soften the blow of past recessions.

As the composition of the United States workforce has changed over the decades, unemployment insurance eligibility requirements have failed to keep up in many states.

One very significant change is the number of women in the workforce. Women are more likely to be forced to leave work to care for an ailing relative, avoid domestic violence, or to move in order to follow a spouse who is being transferred. Unfortunately, in many states--including Nevada--losing a job for one of these reasons may not qualify you for benefits. While the Nevada Department of

Employment, Training and Rehabilitation looks at each claim on a case by case basis and may approve a claim if there is a police report for corroboration, there is nothing in statute that requires them to do so and many people are left without the help they need.

I believe the incentives included in the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act will help states move toward providing benefits to more of these individuals. I am happy to have this opportunity to further investigate this issue and I look forward to hearing the witnesses' testimony.